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NSC

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13 Apr 54

NSC BRIEFING

14 April 1954

MILITARY SITUATION IN INDOCHINA

I. French have retaken an important point at Dien Bien Phu as renewed enemy assaults awaited.

A. Eliane subposition 1 recaptured on 10 April; violent enemy counterattacks thus far been repulsed.

B. Eliane 1 has commanding view of most of central defenses and thus is important observation post for either side. However, it is dominated in turn by enemy-held Dominique 2. French retention will therefore be difficult.

II. French have established new strongpoint, Lily, combining parts of Huguette and Claudine to strengthen west side of central defenses.

III. French also have reinforced with another Foreign Legion paratroop battalion.

A. This makes four battalions dropped in since middle March.

IV. Viet Minh believed by French planning third round of mass assaults;

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A. Heavy new enemy entrenchments around Isabelle

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[redacted] forecast major effort there. Flanking fire from this strongpoint been important in beating off attacks on main complex.

B. [redacted] about 13,000 Viet Minh replacements have arrived recently, and

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[redacted] another 13,000 on way.

C. The arrivals are probably low-quality auxiliaries and recruits, [redacted]

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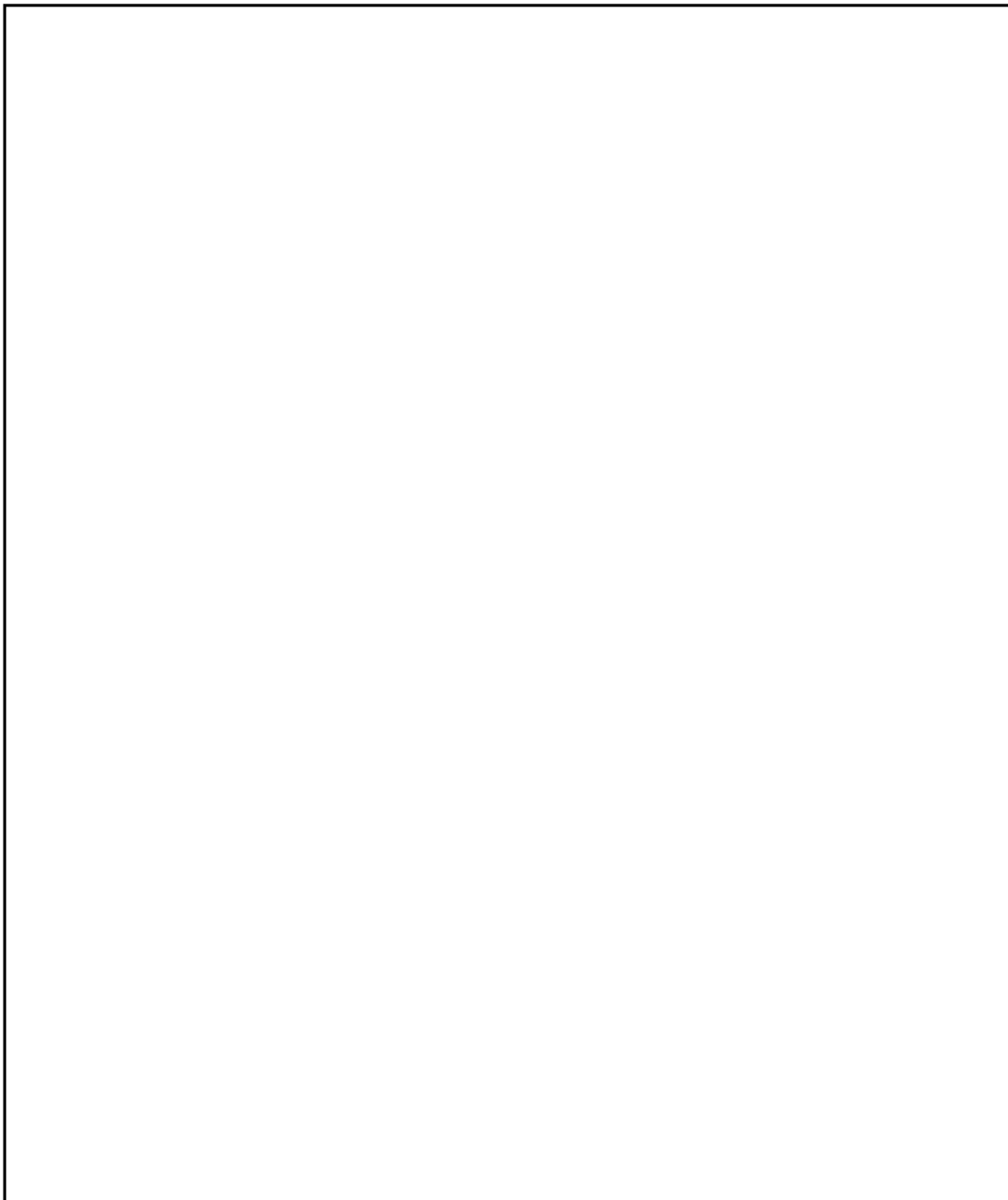
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VI. In rest of Indochina, enemy guerrilla tactics and harassment continue.

A. Haiphong-Hanoi communications repeatedly cut and enemy capabilities in delta not yet fully exerted.

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B. Attack made 8 April on Vientiane airfield by enemy guerrillas. This was not very damaging but was further evidence of coordinated Viet Minh attempts to destroy French communications, harass important installations, spread French effort thinner.

25X1 C. [redacted] several Viet Minh regular units east of Pleiku in Annam indicates plan to maintain pressure this area and prevent transfer French units to Tonkin.

D. Two enemy battalions last reported heading south toward Stung Treng, in Cambodia, so far have evaded French task force of five pursuing battalions.

VII.

[redacted]

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A. Actually Vietnam government eager to build up army.

B. But handicapped by fence-sitting attitude among Viets, who fear French deal with Viet Minh.

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[redacted]

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- C. French have control of training of Viet army, but have failed to make maximum effort. They hotly oppose US help or advice.
- D. Opposition of politico-religious warlord armies totaling about 26,000 troops to integration into national army has received some "divide and rule" encouragement from French.

VIII. Vietnamese regular army now totals some 129,000 troops, plus additional 29,000 in National Guard which considered part of regular forces.

- A. Vietnamese troops are organized in battalion or smaller units, dispersed throughout Indochina: 56,000 in Tonkin, 50,000 in Annam, and 52,000 in Cochinchina.
- B. Combat efficiency low, owing to lack of experience, spotty morale, inadequate training, few good officers.
- C. These troops largely engaged in static defense; brunt of any operations falls on French and colonial troops.
- D. Light battalion program begun last year resulted in formation of 55 units; 66 more tentatively planned for this year. These units may eventually constitute striking force, but are inadequate for purpose now.